19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

565 554 But these forms of wealth brought with them only more or less prestige within the single stratum comprising the entire community.

476 [554] [721] 324 326 There was little occasion for individual initiative among the Karen, on account of the important part played by communal activity amongst them. One could claim no particular credit for his deeds of blood on a raid. That belonged rather to the organizer and leader of the foray. One never set out on a journey or attempted any special work alone. In some sections it was the custom for the chief to beat a gong or blow a horn as the signal to go to the fields. Every one went at the signal. None would go without it. If a supply of fish was wanted, instead of an individual taking his or her rod and going alone to catch them, the whole village, or as many of its members as were free to do so, would join in a fishing expedition, first gathering the herbs to poison the water if the fish were to be taken in that way, or carrying along their funnel-shaped baskets with which to work the bottom of a shallow stream, or going prepared to resort to whatever other method they thought suitable to the time and place. Likewise hunting was commonly conducted as a drive for game in which all might participate, at least all the men; and a motley variety of implements was brought out for the purpose, including nets, crossbows, spears, knives, and perhaps an old rusty gun. Thus they hunted and fished together, as they often do still. Even those who failed to go were not left out in the division of the spoils, if they managed to be present at the proper time, and they usually did.

476 424 311 This communal sharing was so much the order of the day that personal rights were more or less disregarded. If a man got a few seeds and planted a garden near his house, he was fortunate, as is sometimes still the case in the hills, if he gathered half the crop he had planted. His neighbors, asking no leave, helped themselves generously without hesitation and perhaps without intending to steal.

423 685 While one's personal rights were thus disregarded, they were not entirely ignored. A man's field or "hkū" and his betel gardens were his own; and his paddy-bins, which may have been built in the jungle a mile from the village, were respected. If he marked with a bunch of grass a tree in which he had discovered a hive of wild bees, no one would attempt to rob it of its honey. Many of the Karen people are like children in their regard for the rights of other persons: they understand and abide by the law of established

19: Marshall M-6 (ca. 1918) 1922 AP1 Burma
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usage, but they are somewhat puzzled by new situations and in such cases are apt to give themselves the benefit of the doubt. Stealing, such as appropriating paddy from a bin or leading off another's ox or taking somebody's money, is severely dealt with among the Karen. But carrying away a small trinket that takes the eye, either with or without the owner's permission, is not considered important enough to be noticed.

The Women

Among races less advanced than the Karen the attention of the men is almost entirely taken up with warfare and hunting, while the work about the house and village is left to the women. The Karen have not progressed far enough beyond primitive conditions for the men to assume all the burdens of the home life that properly fall to the stronger sex. The men still feel their superiority and remain idle, while the women do work too heavy for them. Even apart from the care of the children, the women bear the heavy end of the burden. They are, to be sure, accepted as necessary and useful members of the family, but, none the less, the men consider themselves dishonored if brought into close contact with a woman's garment or compelled to appear in any way subordinate to a female. They will not, or would not in the olden days, go under a house, lest they should have to pass under a woman. In this respect they entertain feelings similar to those of Burmese men.

As housekeeper the Karen woman's work is by no means confined within the irregular partitions of her living-room or house. She draws the water, which means in the hills that she must descend to the stream and carry up the family supply in bamboo joints hung by strings across her head. She has been trained to do this from the time she was so small that she could only struggle up the hillside with one undersized bamboo at her side. Usually she has her little girls' help in this daily task. (See p. 140.) She must pound and winnow the paddy, polish it in a mortar, wash it, and prepare the meals. Either she brings in fagots of wood and splits it, or the young women fetch bundles of dry bamboo upon their heads and stack them near the ladder of the house. (See p. 132.) She is as skilled in the use of the "dah" (long knife) as her husband. When the meal is cooked she sets it out, if she follows the old custom, on a wide wooden tray or, if she has adopted new ways,

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[783] 684 671 241

appease the Lord of heaven and earth and to find out the guilty persons.

685 538

On the subject of stealing the exhortation of the elders was not to steal, destroy, defraud, or act dishonestly. Such deeds are by no means secret. Even though unconfessed, they become manifest in the ordeal by water and in that of ascending a tree. The God of heaven sees. The Lord of the mountains and hills, "Thi Hko Mü Xa," sees. If one is hungry, one should work, should bend the back. If one wants fish, one should use the hand-net. If one desires game, let one repair to the jungle for it. Families are to be fed in this way, not by stealing or by running into debt.

A person who had been caught stealing might be let off, if it was his first offense and he restored the stolen property and promised to reform. If, however, he became a confirmed thief, he was sold into slavery. In some parts of the Toungoo district it was not uncommon for one guilty of stealing to pay the penalty with his life. If positive proof was lacking and there was doubt as to his guilt, the ordeal by water was resorted to.

682 538

Murder was, of course, utterly condemned in the sayings of the elders, for "man is not like the beasts. He has a Lord and Master. We are the children of Thi Hko, of Y'wa who created us. Therefore, do not kill one another." The murderer will be surrendered to the Lord of the lands and will be put to death. He can not escape. His body will be left naked in the fields, and the vultures will devour it. "These things," the elders declare, "have we seen with our own eyes, and we know them, and they have often happened among us." However, the circumstances under which a murder was committed were taken into account. A homicide at a drunken feast was considered an accident, for it was thought that the one guilty of the crime would not have committed it had he been sober. No cause for an action existed in such a case.

761 672

Men killed while taking part in a foray were to be redeemed, that is, a fine was to be paid for them, unless the leader had been excused from such payment in advance.[4] Likewise, the accidental death of a man during a trading, hunting, or other trip undertaken at the request of another, was chargeable to the latter, because otherwise it would not have occurred.

682 628

The recognized way of bringing to justice an offender who was accused of causing the death of another, was for the near relatives

[4] See p. 157.